

NEWS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA San Diego, California

***United States Attorney
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For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - June 22, 2004

United States Attorney Carol C. Lam announced the sentencing in San Diego today of Robert L. McCoy and his Russian-born wife, Anna Grountovaia, for operating a fraudulent Russian dating scheme via the internet. On April 7, 2004, the couple pled guilty to conspiracy to commit wire fraud. The Honorable John S. Rhoades, United States District Court Judge, imposed the maximum prison term of five years upon McCoy. Judge Rhoades sentenced Grountovaia to twelve months and one day in custody.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard C. Cheng, who prosecuted the case, the indictment alleged that McCoy and Grountavaia impersonated Russian women on the internet and posted on-line ads seeking serious relationships with men. At times, McCoy and Grountavaia would also respond to on-line ads posted by other men in order to induce the men into developing on-line relationships. After the initial contact was established, McCoy and Grountavalia would then send e-mails and contact the victims by telephone to entice the victims into wiring funds to Russia. In these communications, McCoy and Grountavaia would claim to belong to an "agency" that could help facilitate travel to the victim's home

country. Under the guise of this purported Russian agency, McCoy and Grountavaia sent further e-mails to the victims, instructing them to wire sums ranging from \$1,790 to \$1,850 so that the “agency” could process flight arrangements, obtain visas, and secure placements for the Russian women in student exchange programs. After a victim would wire the money, believing a Russian woman would soon arrive, McCoy and Grountavaia would then cease all contact with the victim.

The case was the product of an investigation conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the U.S. Secret Service, the National White Collar Crime Center, and the Federal Trade Commission. The investigation was initiated in January 2002, after an individual reported he had been defrauded over the internet.

DEFENDANTS

Robert L. McCoy

Anna Grountavaia

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Title 18, United States Code, Sections 371 and 1343 (Conspiracy To Commit Wire Fraud)
Maximum Penalty: Five years in prison and \$250,000 fine.

AGENCIES

Federal Bureau of Investigation
U.S. Postal Inspection Service
U.S. Secret Service
National White Collar Crime Center
Federal Trade Commission